

A Danger: Cold War Between Races

BY MORRIE RYSKIND

As a friend warned recently, the wise thing for a nonliberal commentator to do is to keep his opinions on controversial issues to himself and attack only such objects of universal hatred as the man-eating shark. Otherwise, it can get awfully hot in the kitchen.

But I'd probably flop even if I tried to follow my friend's injunction. True, I don't care much for sharks, and I suppose I could, if pressed, think up some nasty words against them; yet, reading "Moby Dick," my sympathies are often with the great white whale instead of Ahab. Maybe I am inhuman, as is so often charged.

Particularly now, when the march on Washington is on everybody's mind, I have reported, I believe objectively, that the demonstrations, which began with vows of turning the other cheek and nonviolence, have turned into mobism and thus forfeited the sympathy of the average American, whose basic instinct is to help the underdog.

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Lie-downs and sit-ins and rock-throwing have destroyed inherent good will by creating the ugly image of hoodlumism.

I do not argue that this should be so—I simply say it is so.

If you have any doubts, forget the high-sounding phrases and talk frankly to your friends and neighbors. You will find, as I have, that many who were willing to be persuaded have arched their backs and refuse to be—in their own words—coerced.

A friend who owns an apartment building thought she would do her bit by asking her tenants how they'd feel if a Negro moved in. They were on the fence, so to speak—but no longer. Since some nearby demonstrations, they say unequivocally they would move out.

At the bottom is fear—stark fear and bitter resentment. And that, as my mail shows, is not an isolated case, but a typical reaction.

I don't know what legislation the march on Washington will produce, but neither the 14th Amendment nor the Interstate



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Commerce clause can remove that fear. We may wind up as compulsory neighbors through legal processes, but hardly as friends.

And a cold war between the races may be far more menacing to us than the one with Russia.

I would add that my letters, as well as some private talks, disclose that many Negroes disapprove vehemently of the current tactics of the NAACP and CORE; and a legislator tells me that, when he was in the South recently, he was asked by a committee of colored folk if he couldn't in some way stop "outsiders" from coming in and disrupting the progress that had been made in inter-racial relations.

But the dissenting letters charge that my reporting is colored by rank racism. And one—from a Negro—justifies what I consider the most pernicious of the current demands: the strict application of the quota system and the ultimatum that every business have its 10% of colored employees.

That quota edict could easily backfire. I was one of the crowd of 54,125 that saw the Dodgers play the Cardinals in a 16-inning thriller the other night at Chavez Ravine. The Dodger nine fielded five colored players. Suppose some white groups began picketing on the ground there should be only one Negro in the line-up, on a percentage basis?

You take one of those stalwarts, let alone four, out of the batting order and zip! goes the pennant.

The subject is hardly one to jest about, but I'm inevitably reminded of the pickets some years ago at a football game between the Los Angeles Rams and the Washington Redskins. The Rams had plenty of colored players, but Washington had none. And the sign the Negro pickets carried read, with superb unconscious irony, "Redskins, go home!"

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Oh, well, maybe I'm wrong. The President is all for the march, as are the attorney general, New York's Mayor Wagner and Sen. Javits. And, perhaps even more important, so is Marlon Brando.

On which subject there's a letter from G. H., a fellow journalist: "If Brando really feels evangelical about integrating white neighborhoods, why should he go long distances? He could start right on his own street. Let him show how sincere he is by organizing a nice, ugly demonstration in front of his neighbors' homes. Then let him live with the bitterness and the scars that are left."

"If famous whites really want integration and want to be believed, here's hoping they have the courage to picket their own neighborhoods. Anything else seems to me to be indecent mischief."

At the risk of seeming racistly inhuman, I think the gentleman has a point.